

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH IN SCOTLAND AND EDUCATION

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I SHALL try, first of all, to define the scope of this paper. In the Middle Ages, that is, approximately, from the reign of David I (1124-1153), when the Roman Church became definitely established and organized in Scotland, to the Reformation, when that Church was swept away, education was primarily the concern of the Church and of Churchmen. Schools and Universities were mainly church foundations and functioned under ecclesiastical control. Scotland had no University until St. Andrews was founded in 1411. But long before that date, Scotland had schools, and it is with these that I am concerned.

Further, the long-standing notion that education in medieval Scotland was largely in the hands of the monasteries is now discredited. Professor Edgar wrote in his *History of Education in Scotland*: "When we mention . . . Dunfermline, Kelso, Arbroath, Melrose, Coldingham, Newbattle and Dundrennan, it will be evident (*sic*) that there were at least stately buildings and great endowments consecrated, in part at least, to the cause of education"¹; but he goes on to confess: "It is unfortunate that the extant Registers of the monasteries do not give us more information about the educational work done within their walls."

The evidence regarding the monastic contribution to education has been examined, e.g., in Coulton's Rhind Lectures, where it is set forth in his chapter on Schools²; and the conclusion is that, apart from a few isolated instances,³ the direct educational work of the Scottish monasteries was negligible. This, however, is a negative conclusion, and the positive fact is that the secular as contrasted with the regular clergy were chiefly responsible for such educational activities as were carried on under the auspices of the Medieval Church.

I

The subject has been partially dealt with by Robertson, Grant, Hay Fleming and others. But anyone who investigates the nature and extent

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 74.

² *Scottish Abbeys*, p. 175 foll.

³ Kinloss supplies one of these instances. Another, not mentioned by Coulton, is the Grammar School at the Abbey of Culross (*See* article by W. M. Mackenzie, *Scotsman*, April 12, 1933).

of medieval education in Scotland is faced with an obstinate difficulty—there is a great paucity of material which contrasts significantly with the wealth of data available in English records, such as appears in Leach's *Schools of Medieval England*. It is on a minimum of recorded facts that we have to base our conclusions.

We find in Scottish records mention of schools and schoolmasters from the twelfth century onwards. The schools at Ellon and Arbuthnott, as Robertson has adequately shown,¹ were relics of the Celtic Church; and those of Dunkeld and St. Andrews, as well as Abernethy, Dunblane and Muthil (whose masters in the twelfth century had Gaelic names), were of a similar category.² There were schools in the same century at Perth,³ Stirling,⁴ Linlithgow,⁹ Roxburgh,⁵ Lanark⁶; at Ayr⁷, Berwick-on-Tweed,⁸ Dundee¹⁰ and Aberdeen,¹¹ in the thirteenth; at Edinburgh,¹² Inverness,¹³ Dumfries,¹⁴ Haddington,¹⁵ Cupar,¹⁶ in the fourteenth; and others, as at Peebles¹⁷ and Leith,¹⁸ are mentioned at a later date. Some of these schools were included in the grants of churches to monasteries. The school of Linlithgow was appropriated with the church to St. Andrews Priory;¹⁹ while the schools at Perth and Stirling were appropriated to Dunfermline,²⁰ the churches being already made over to that abbey. This does not mean that they were monastic schools, supervised by the monastery or taught by monks. The monastery's interest in them was a matter, probably, of drawing revenue from them, but, chiefly, of exercising the right of patronage in the appointment of secular priests as schoolmasters. Grant²¹ has much exaggerated the dignity of the schoolmaster's office on the strength of the fact that Masters of Schools, in the earlier medieval period, frequently appear in the records of important transactions. Yet the reason is obvious enough—they, at least, were bound to be literate. But whatever honour was attached to the post, the medieval schoolmaster, like the medieval vicar, was apt to be a poorly-paid hireling. Of the earlier medieval schools, attached to parish churches, we know practically nothing beyond their names; and what their curriculum was we cannot say.

In 1179, the Lateran Council made an edict for the appointment of a schoolmaster, who was to be provided with a prebend, in all cathedral

¹ *Spald. Club Misc.*, V, App. to Preface, p. 57 foll. ² *Reg. S. And.*, p. 116; *Lindores*, XLV, XLVII, XXXIII. ³ *Passelet*, p. 229; *Dunfermlyn*, 96. ⁴ *Dunfermlyn*, 96. ⁵ *Reg. S. And.*, p. 63. ⁶ *Calchou*, 239. ⁷ *Dryburgh*, 194. ⁸ *Passelet*, p. 164. ⁹ *Calchou*, p. 278. ¹⁰ *Lundoris*, p. 17. ¹¹ *Aberbrothoc*, I, 254. ¹² Mentioned in 1378 (*C. P. R. Petitions*, I, p. 549). ¹³ *Barron, War of Independence*, p. xxxvi, where, however, no precise reference is given. ¹⁴ *Exch. Rolls*, I, p. 303. ¹⁵ *Do.*, II, p. 602. ¹⁶ *Do.*, I, p. 601. ¹⁷ *Peebles Burgh Recs.*, *passim*. ¹⁸ *Edinburgh B.R.*, I, p. 206. ¹⁹ *Reg. S. And.*, p. 63. ²⁰ *Dunfermlyn*, 96.

²¹ *History of Burgh Schools in Scotland*, pp. 9-11.

churches, to instruct the young and the poor clergy. Cathedral schools were in existence in Scotland in the following century. In 1256/7, the constitutions of the Cathedral of Aberdeen supply the earliest mention both of a cathedral school and its curriculum. It was of the Chancellor's office that he should provide a proper master for the school¹ of Aberdeen, able to teach the boys both grammar and logic.² In 1259, a letter from the chapter of Salisbury, on whose cathedral constitution the dean and chapter of Glasgow evidently intended to model their own, described the Chancellor's office as concerned with ruling the school—which came to mean at Glasgow that he appointed the Master of the Grammar School³—and it goes on to state that there belongs to the Precentor's office the instruction and discipline of the choir boys and to the office of the Succentor the rule of the Song School by his official.⁴ The schools attached to other Scottish cathedrals are mentioned at later dates. At Brechin, alone in Scotland, there was a college of choristers (founded by Walter, Earl of Athole and Caithness) with a residence of their own, as at Lincoln in England;⁵ two chaplains were, in 1429, to be attached to this college, one to teach the Song School, on behalf of the Cantor, and the other the Grammar School, on behalf of the Chancellor.⁶ In 1489, the chapter of Moray ordained that a "general school" be built at Elgin and a suitable master appointed by the Chancellor, to teach grammar to those who came to it; and, likewise, that the Precentor is to hold a Song School and appoint to it a suitable man to instruct those who came to it in singing and reading.⁷ At Dunkeld, in the sixteenth century, the Chancellor endowed a scholastic chaplain, who was to serve St. George's Church and to be Master of the Grammar School;⁸ and at Kirkwall, in 1544, Bishop Reid instituted a grammar school, the Master of which was to be chaplain of St. Peter's altar in the Cathedral and a graduate in Arts.⁹ It is to be noted, then, that in connection with the cathedrals, two types of schools arose—the Grammar School, of which, as in England and France, the Chancellor had the nominal supervision,¹⁰ the Master being of his appointment and, nominally, his deputy; and the Song School, of which the

¹ The plural form, "scholae," is nearly always used with a singular meaning. See Leach, p. 111.

² *Reg. Ep. Aberd.*, II, p. 278.

³ *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, II, p. 470.

⁴ *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, I, p. 211.

⁵ Leach, p. 213.

⁶ *Reg. Ep. Brech.*, II, p. 26.

⁷ *Reg. Ep. Moray.*, pp. 270, 262-3.

⁸ *Rentale Dunkeldense*, p. 323. In 1561, there were two schools—of grammar and of song—at Dunkeld (*op. cit.*, p. 342).

⁹ Grant, p. 21, quoting Peterkin, *Rentals of Orkney*, App. 42.

¹⁰ At St. Andrews, the Archdeacon supervised the Grammar School (*Statuta*, II, 290).

supervision and appointment of the Master similarly pertained to the Precentor.

II

A type of church which appeared first in Scotland c.1250 and in the next three centuries became fairly common added a third group of schools. The collegiate churches, the most characteristic ecclesiastical foundations of the later Middle Ages, arose out of the vogue of masses for the dead and were intended to secure such a continuity of masses as was not possible in an ordinary parish church. Thus they were endowed to maintain an incorporated group or *college* of priests, headed by a Provost or Dean. But the important point for our consideration is that on most of these foundations were boy-choristers; and in order to supply them with a sufficient knowledge of Latin and music for the services of the choir, most collegiate churches had schools. This was a late development in Scotland. In England, as early as the end of the eleventh century, we find at Hastings a collegiate church with a Song School and Grammar School.¹ It is not till 1342, in the foundation-charter of the Collegiate Church of Dunbar,² that a Scottish instance occurs. The Dean, it is stated there, is to have "the rule of the school,"³ which probably implies that the teaching was done by a Master or Masters deputed for him. But except in those collegiate churches, which were aggrandized parish churches in the burghs—of these I shall say more presently—the Masters of the Song School and the Grammar School were not, as a rule, hired deputies, but co-equal members of the group of priests forming the college.

In the Collegiate Church of Semple in Renfrewshire, the fifth chaplain was to teach a Song School, and the sixth chaplain to teach the choir-boys grammar.⁴ At Cullen, the first prebendary was to teach a Song School at the Collegiate Church, and the fifth, who was also to serve St. Andrew's altar, was to be well-learned in grammar and rule and teach a regular Grammar School in the town of Cullen.⁵ Similarly, the Collegiate Churches of Restalrig⁶ and Our Lady College, Glasgow,⁷ had Song Schools, and those of Crail,⁸ Peebles,⁹ and Biggar¹⁰ had both Song Schools and

¹ Leach, p. 115.

² *Nat. Lib. MS.* 34.3.11.

³ "Regimen scholarum." It is difficult to say whether, in this case, "scolae" is to be translated "school" or "schools." At a later date, Dunbar had both a Song School and a Grammar School (*Hutton's Collections*, V, p. 179).

⁴ *Sheriffdoms of Lanark and Renfrew*, p. 287. ⁵ Cramond, *Cullen*, pp. 37, 46.

⁶ *Coll. Chs. of Midlothian*, p. 283. ⁷ *Lib. Coll. N.D.*, Pref., p. xvii, etc.

⁸ *Reg. C.C. of Crail*, pp. 12, 33.

⁹ See *infra*.

¹⁰ *Spalding Club Misc.*, V, p. 299.

Grammar Schools. The schools of the collegiate churches were, however, very small. Frequently, there were only two choir-boys on the foundation. No such development took place in Scotland as at Winchester and Eton in England, where the educational side of collegiate churches was cultivated on an unprecedented scale. Winchester, according to a papal bull of 1378, was designed to have on its foundation no less than seventy poor scholars studying grammar; while Eton, founded in 1440, was to have six boy-choristers and "twenty-five poor and needy scholars to learn grammar there";¹ and from these foundations the present schools are directly descended. Except in the two Scottish collegiate churches, which were also University colleges—St. Salvator's, St. Andrews, and King's College, Aberdeen—the educational side of these collegiate foundations played no preponderating part. It was incidental rather than essential to the foundation. Thus it is that, historically speaking, boarding schools of the English type are an exotic in Scotland.

The same religious vogue that led to the erection of collegiate churches brought about an important parallel development. Some of the larger burghs—Edinburgh, Peebles, Stirling, Aberdeen—had parish churches which ultimately acquired a collegiate status. Others, like Dundee, Ayr and Linlithgow had parish churches which approximated to a collegiate form. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a definite movement on the part of the burghs to obtain a larger measure of control over their churches. Burghs came to assume responsibility for the upkeep and enlargement of the church fabrics; and with the increase of the number of clergy by the endowment of chaplainries at side-altars and the foundation of colleges of choristers, burghs acquired extensive rights of patronage in their churches and came to control the schools attached to them and to appoint the schoolmaster. This was so at Peebles in 1464, when, on 1st October:

"the balyais and nychtburis has grantit and ordanyt endurand thair wyllis to Schyr William Blaklok to haf the scule and to be scule-master and tyll teche the chylder and to tak the prophet (*sic*) of the scole (h)as efferis of the chylder at he teches";²

and at Aberdeen on 5th May, 1483:

"It is ordanit decretit and deliuerit be the alderman and counsale for the sustentation and augmentation of diuine seruice to be made in the paris kirk that Richard Boyl salhaf and bruke the sang scule of Abirdene as principale maister of the samyn, with help and supple of his old maister Sir Andro Thomson and to labour and do thare

¹ Leach, pp. 204, 252.

² *Extracts from Peebles Burgh Recs.*, p. 152.

besy diligence to cure to mak and furnyss barnys and children vnder thaim to stuf the qveyr and mak service therein continually and daly."¹

As Grant has pointed out, the Chancellor of the diocese of Aberdeen, in the sixteenth century, challenged the right of the burgh to appoint the Master of the Grammar School; but, in the end, although the town presented its nominee to the Chancellor for admission, it maintained its right of patronage.² The Chancellor of Glasgow, in 1494, likewise asserted his right to appoint to the Grammar School there.³ But the burghs secured to themselves more and more the patronage of their schools. When, in 1542, Sir David Bowman founded a grammar school in connection with the Collegiate Church of Crail, he vested the patronage in the Town Council;⁴ and although the Abbey of Dunfermline successfully retained the patronage of the Grammar Schools of Dunfermline and Perth, the burgh of Edinburgh appears to have taken over the patronage of the Grammar School which, until the early sixteenth century, was in the patronage of Holyrood.⁵

Song Schools played a somewhat unexpected rôle in medieval education. Apart from the schools attached to cathedral and collegiate churches for the instruction of choir-boys in music, we find in the burghs what were virtually public Song Schools. In 1466, Master John Doby was appointed to the school at Peebles

"outtakand thai that leyryt to syng . . . and quha that put ony barnis tyll him suld pay him a yeris payment."⁶

In 1551, George Cochrane, parish clerk of Ayr, offers to teach a song school within the burgh;⁷ and in 1553 Sir Edward Henrisoun is Master of the Burgh Sang Scule of Edinburgh.⁸ There is an instance, the only one known, of such a school in a rural parish. Archbishop Forman of St. Andrews approved a proposal from the parishioners of K.,⁹ who, assembled in their church agreed to found a chaplainry of the Holy Rood, their nominee to conduct a public song school for the Gregorian chant, descant and the organ.¹⁰ It appears that these schools were maintained not only

¹ *Cart. Eccl. S. Nich. Aberd.*, II, p. 335.

² Grant, p. 31 foll.

³ *Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, II, 470.

⁴ Lee, *Lectures*, I, p. 335.

⁵ Cf. *Edinburgh Burgh Recs.*, I, p. 165. The patronage of the Song School, attached to St. Giles', was already in the hands of the municipality. Holyrood had also a school in its burgh of the Canongate (*Lib. S. Crucis*, App. II, 26; *R.M.S.*, III, 918).

⁶ *Peebles Burgh Recs.*, p. 155.

⁷ Grant, p. 30, from *Ayr B.R.*

⁸ *Edinburgh B.R.*, II, pp. 185-186. ⁹ The name of the parish is not given in full.

¹⁰ Herkless and Hannay, *Archbps. of St. Ands.*, II, p. 246, from St. Andrews *Formulare*.

for instruction in music but as vernacular schools—as opposed to the Grammar Schools, where Latin was spoken alike by master and pupil—supplying elementary education.¹ The Cathedral School founded at Elgin in 1489—virtually a burgh school—was to provide for all who came to it instruction in music and reading.²

III

Another type of elementary school, common in England, is very sparsely represented in Scotland. This is the chantry school, so-called because it was taught, as part of his duty, by a priest serving an endowed chantry-altar in a rural parish church or chapel. Only one undoubted instance has come to my notice. It occurs in a charter of David Strachan of Carmyllie, who, in 1500, founded a chaplainry in the Chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Carmyllie; and, in addition to the usual stipulation for the celebration of masses by the chaplain for the founder and his wife, the charter goes on:

“Further, I will and ordain that the chaplain for the time being should hold continually at the said chapel a school for the instruction of the young, and for his service assiduously teach them.”³

Such a school was designed to supply the rudiments of education to the children of the neighbourhood.

The Grammar Schools, however, represent what may be regarded as the commonest and most characteristic type of medieval school. What of their curriculum? Here, also, the evidence is scanty. The basis of medieval education was the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium*, the *Trivium* consisting of Grammar, Rhetoric and Dialectic (or Logic), and the *Quadrivium* of Music, Arithmetic, Geometry and Astronomy.⁴ Leach has stated that, in England, the *Trivium* was the domain of the Grammar School, while the *Quadrivium plus* Theology became the domain of the University.⁵ But although the boys of the Grammar School at Aberdeen were taught Grammar and Logic, in practice, Grammar was the staple subject of the medieval school curriculum, “the doorway to all knowledge.”⁶ The evidences of the grammar school curriculum belong mainly

¹ At Aberdeen, on 15th Sept., 1503, it is recorded that “the childe Cristy Narne . . . was passit fra the sang scule to the gramer scule” (*Cart. S. Nich*, II, p. 342). This would appear to suggest that the Song School was regarded as leading up to the Grammar School.

² *Reg. Ep. Morav.*, pp. 262-263.

³ *Reg. de Panmure*, II, p. 266.

⁴ The seven subjects of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* are still represented by the seven subjects of the Scottish M.A. degree.

⁵ Leach, p. 139.

⁶ There was a grammar master at King's College, Aberdeen, but his work was probably among the choir-boys.

to the sixteenth century. The first stages of it are mentioned in an entry in Edinburgh Burgh Records. On 10th January, 1519/20 :

“ the provest, baillies and counsell statutis and ordanis that na maner of nychtbour nor indweller within this burgh put thair barnis till ony particular scule within this town bot to the principall grammer scule of the samyn,¹ to be techeit in ony science bot allanerlie grace buke prymar and plane donatt.”²

The grace-book, common also in England, contained graces before and after meat, which were usually included with the alphabet. The word “ primer ” is used to this day. “ Donatt ” was the grammar of the fourth-century grammarian, Aelius Donatus. It was *the* grammar of the Middle Ages. Wyntoun speaks of it—

“ Donate . . .
That now barnys oysys to lere
At thaire begynnyng of gramere ” ;³

and it was among the first books printed in Scotland.⁴ But it was not the only grammar in use. An interesting clause in the foundation-charter of the Collegiate Church of Semple declares of the sixth chaplain of that church, who is to be the schoolmaster, that if he is unable perfectly to teach the boys grammar, *especially the first and second parts of Alexander*, he is to be dismissed as unfit.⁵ “ Alexander ” was Alexander de Villedieu or de Villa Dei, a Dominican friar of the thirteenth century, whose grammar in doggerel Latin verse was commonly used in England and abroad ; but this is the only mention of its use in Scotland. The grammar of Despauter was printed in Scotland,⁶ but there is no indication of the extent to which it was used ; and the one medieval grammar written by a Scotsman, that of John Vaus, the first edition of which was printed at Paris in 1522, was only in use, so far as we know, at Aberdeen.⁷ It is on the eve of the Reformation that other subjects of study are mentioned, again, at Aberdeen. The boys there, who were divided into classes, read Virgil, Terence, Cicero and Quintilian. The method of discussion or disputation, so characteristic of the medieval Universities, as well as the method of repetition was in vogue. They learnt the art of counting ; and they passed

¹ This indicates that there were also private schools in the town.

² *Edin. B.R.*, I, p. 194. Grant, however, interprets this to mean that children were not to be sent to any other than the High School, unless to learn elementary knowledge (*Burgh Schools*, p. 63).

³ *Orig. Chronykil*, V, c.x., 704, quoted Grant, p. 48.

⁴ Grant, pp. 48-49.

⁵ *Sheriffdoms of Lanark and Renfrew*, p. 291.

⁶ Grant, p. 49.

⁷ Grant, p. 50.

from the study of grammar to the study of logic.¹ It is to be observed, however, that these statutes of Aberdeen Grammar School are not only of late date (1553), but belong to an exceptionally well-developed Scottish grammar school. By this time, the belated influence of the Renaissance was at work. I do not intend to discuss in detail the question of the extent to which Greek was taught in Scottish schools before the Reformation. Grant gives the evidence² and seems to have proved that it was taught. But, in contrast to the English medieval schools,³ it appears that the teaching of Greek was of late (i.e. sixteenth century) and exceptional occurrence in Scotland, nor did it take so prominent a place in the curriculum as in England. Latin remained the language which was spoken and taught in the Grammar School, and grammar continued to be the staple subject. The type of the average curriculum is indicated by Sir David Bowman's provision for the Grammar School at Crail, founded in 1542. The schoolmasters, who are to be graduates in grammar and arts :

" will teach and rule a grammar school and teach the boys the Latin language and not the vernacular (*docebunt pueros litteras latinas et non vulgares*), instructing them (also) in good and honest manners."⁴

The length of the curriculum may be judged from the stipulation imposed upon Adam Mure, Master of the High School of Edinburgh, who, on 19th May, 1531 :

" oblist him to mak the bairnys perfyte grammariaris within thre yeris."⁶

IV

One feature of the medieval schools which long survived the Reformation was the association of education with religion. The notion of a purely secular education was unknown ; the place of religious instruction in schools was taken for granted. At Aberdeen Grammar School, the boys were to say a prayer on entering ; and in the evening, after the disputations, they were to hasten to sing prayers to God. They learnt the table of confession ;⁶ and no doubt, in addition to the graces, Scottish school-

¹ The Statutes are given in *Spalding Club Misc.*, V, p. 399 foll. Cf. the Statute : " Nullus de grege Grammaticorum cum Dialectico agat." The relative educational importance of Grammar and Logic may be judged from the 201st Statute of the Provincial Council of 1549. (See Patrick, *Statutes*, p. 109.)

² *Burgh Schools*, p. 47.

³ See Leach, p. 246 foll.

⁴ Lee, *Lectures*, I, pp. 334-335.

⁵ *Edinburgh B.R.*, II, p. 48.

⁶ *Spalding Club Misc.*, V, p. 400.

boys, like those of England, France and Germany were taught the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed and, perhaps, the Psalter.¹ There has been preserved a curious commentary by a medieval schoolmaster on the custom, which long survived the Reformation, of scholars attending religious services. In a Linlithgow Protocol Book, it is recorded, on 9th January, 1538/9, that Mr. James Brown, schoolmaster of Linlithgow, made a statement to Henry Forrest, bailie of that burgh :

" Sayand that Schir Hendrie Louk, curat of Linlithqw, held his barnis that he kennit in his scoule at sic subjection aw and bandone and siclik himself that he and the said barnis behufit to enter in the kirk to Goddis service at the latter peilss (place) on festuale dais bayth mess and evinsang and settis down in the said kirk on cauld stanis quhen the(y) mycht have dune gret proffit and steid to thaimselfis to have lerit in the schull tynand thair tyme."²

Although Scottish educational tradition has rejected boarding-schools in favour of grammar schools of a non-residential type, the two systems—residential and non-residential—are found in juxtaposition in Scottish medieval schools. At Aberdeen Grammar School, the town boys (*oppidani*), if there were any, were to be given permission to go to the town at 11 or 11.30 a.m. ; it is implied that the other boys were boarders.³ On 23rd and 24th January, 1511/12, Master David Vocat of Edinburgh Grammar School was paid for half-a-year's board of two new pupils.⁴ The usual practice of the Middle Ages was that the Master received a fee from his pupils called "scolage."⁵ £5 or £5-10 is mentioned as the sum which covered a pupil's board and schooling at the High School of Edinburgh for six months.⁶ The notion of free education held only in so far as boys on the staff of cathedral and collegiate churches were boarded and taught in return for their services in the choir, and occasional grants were made for the maintenance of poor scholars, e.g., by the Exchequer for the food of a poor pupil at the school at Haddington⁷ and from the Treasury for pupils at the schools of Edinburgh and Stirling.⁸

¹ Clerval, *Les écoles de Chartres*, p. 419 ; Powicke, *Christian Life in the Middle Ages*, pp. 88-89. The pupils of Glasgow Grammar School were to pray every night before dispersing for William Stewart, founder of the chaplainry held by the schoolmaster, and for all the faithful departed (*Reg. Ep. Glasg.*, II, 469).

² *Prot. Book of Thomas Johnsoun*, 177.

³ *Spalding Club Misc.*, V, p. 399. An Ayrshire boy's letters from school appear in the 16th century correspondence of Patrick Vaus of Barbarroch (*Proc. of Ayrshire and Galloway Assoc.*, 14, Pt. 1).

⁴ *Lord Treasurer's Accts.*, IV, pp. 240, 242.

⁵ This was so also in France. Cf. *Les écoles de Chartres*, pp. 358, 427.

⁶ *L. T. A.*, IV, pp. 240, 242, 404.

⁷ *Exch. Rolls*, III, p. 120.

⁸ *L. T. A.*, *ut supra*.

A word may be said about the education of girls. Hay Fleming has illustrated from the evidence of signatures in charters the illiteracy of Scottish nuns, and makes the sarcastic comment on the reference to the "many gentlemen's daughters" who are said to have been at school with the nuns of Elcho in 1549:

"One naturally wonders what the gentlemen's daughters could have been taught in a nunnery of which none of the nuns save the prioress could sign her own name."¹

An earlier instance of the alleged education of young gentlewomen by nuns appears in the first printed volume of the Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer, where it is stated by the Editor, of Lady Margaret, second daughter of James II, that, in 1464,

"she was sent to be educated at the Cistercian priory of Haddington, where she resided till 1477, the prioress receiving yearly a fixed allowance for her board "pro expensis in tabula" or "pro expensis esculentis et poculentis." Here she was placed in charge of Alison Maitland, one of the nuns . . . who acted as her governess during the whole period of her residence."²

But an examination of the items in the Accounts reveals that the expenditure was either for the Princess's victuals or for her wardrobe. The idea of "education" is imported by the Editor.³ There is no evidence of the education of girls being seriously contemplated. Medieval Scotland produced no Héloïse; and we can only conclude that Mary, Queen of Scots, who comes right at the end of the period, must have received her education in France.

The question now arises: To what extent did the idea of universal education prevail in Scotland during the Middle Ages? There are certain isolated instances which seem to point in that direction, the provision, for example, that the Masters of Elgin Cathedral Schools were to teach any who came to them⁴ and the various cases of provision for poor scholars.⁵ There is likewise the general instance of the increase of schools in the land throughout the Middle Ages. But the case most often quoted is that of the Act of Parliament of 1496, which enacted that

"all baronis and frehalderis that ar of substance put thair eldest sonnys to the sculis fra thai be aucht or nyne zeiris of age and till remane at the grammer sculis quhill thai be competentlie foundit and have perfite latyne."

¹ *Reformation*, p. 98. ² *L. T. A.*, I, p. cclxxxv foll.

³ Cf. Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, pp. 261-2, for parallel English instances of nuns "educating" children.

⁴ See *supra*.

⁵ E.g. *Highland Papers*, II, p. 127 (St. Andrews); *Exch. Rolls*, III, p. 120 (Haddington).

V

This Act is sometimes taken as initiating a policy of something like universal education ; but its importance in that respect has been over-rated. For not only was it abortive—there is no known instance of the fine of £20 for non-compliance being paid, and no evidence, indeed, that the Act was ever put into operation ; the plain motive of it was not to foster the pursuit of knowledge for knowledge's sake nor to raise the cultural standard, but to provide the country with competent administrators of justice. Thus, the Act goes on to prescribe :

“ And thairefter to remain thre zeris at the sculis of Art and Jure sua that thai may have knowlege and understanding of the lawis Through the quhilkis Justice may reigne universalie throw all the realm sua that thai that ar Shereffis or Jugeis Ordinaris under the kingis hienes may have knowlege to do justice that the pure pepill suld have na neid to seik our Soverane Lordis principale auditouris for ilk small Injure.”¹

It was, clearly, a measure designed not to introduce universal education, but to create a better administration of law in the land ; and its notable features are that it is the first instance in Scotland of the State concerning itself with education, and that in contemplating a class of educated laymen, it broke away from the medieval idea that a “ clerk ” (an educated man) was *ipso facto* a man in holy orders. The Scottish Provincial Council of 1549 which enacted, in the interests of the revival of learning within the Church, that in the smaller churches provision was to be made for a Master to teach grammar gratuitously to clerks and other poor scholars,² was not concerned with providing the opportunity of universal education, but sought to create an educated priesthood—such scholars were to pass on to the study of Sacred Scripture, i.e. Theology.

The fact is that medieval education could not be universal nor was it ever intended to be so. It was not based on the idea of providing equality of opportunity to all who desired to engage in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. It was fostered by the Church to subserve the Church's ends. Although provision was made for the poor scholar as well as the son of the laird and the burgess, this only meant that poverty did not necessarily debar a boy from proceeding to holy orders. (The fact remains, however, that class-distinctions did count when it came to a question of preferment.) Nor was the dominating ecclesiastical influence in education

¹ The whole Act is given in *Maitland Club Misc.*, II, pp. 5-7.

² *Statutes*, pp. 99-100. Cf. the Statute of Miles d'Illiers, Bishop of Chartres (1487): “ In ecclesiis vero et locis magis populosis et quorum proventus ad hoc sufficere poterunt, habeant clericos qui etiam sciant et possint pueros in litteris primitivis erudire ” (*Les écoles de Chartres*, p. 417).

affected, for example, by the acquisition of the patronage of burgh schools by the municipalities. Grant extols the "warm interest" taken by the burghs in the welfare of their schools as "shown by the jealousy with which they opposed any rival . . . school" set up within the burgh.¹ But the acquisition of patronage meant no more than the obtaining of a feudal privilege which they could exercise in the spirit of the proverb, "Keep your ain fish guts for your ain sea-maws"; and it was to safeguard the patronage rather than the curriculum of its schools that a burgh discouraged private enterprise—it was a matter of upholding *prestige* rather than principle. The burgh appointed the schoolmaster (a Churchman); but it attempted no innovations in the traditional curriculum. The ecclesiastical influence remained unimpaired.

VI

While, then, it would be ungracious to overlook the services of the Medieval Church to education in Scotland—and we must credit it with the schooling of Duns Scotus, Bradwardine and the "Admirable" Crichton, as well as of Knox and Buchanan²—there is good reason to believe that the standard of school education in Scotland was, as compared with England and France, decidedly low. That Church made no effective or systematic attempt to provide educational facilities throughout its parishes. Many towns, no doubt, had schools, but we are forced to conclude that in rural parishes they were rare. Further, we find no provision for the supervision or inspection of schools in medieval Scotland; in France, on the other hand, the visitation of schools is recorded in the sixteenth century, and in 1550, the *curés* of country parishes were to visit the schools once or twice in the year.³ The school curriculum, even in so good a school as that of Aberdeen, was stereotyped and narrow; it is to be remembered, of course, that boys in the Middle Ages went to the University at an early age, and until the nineteenth century, the Scottish Universities did a good deal of the work that is now done in schools. Lastly, the status of the medieval schoolmaster, far from giving him the "high social position" which Grant ascribes to him, was usually that of the ecclesiastical hack, the most poorly-paid and indifferently educated of the clergy, the chantry chaplain who lived on the meagre stipend attached to the altar which he served in a large church. Many schoolmasters, in fact, were also chaplains, and derived their income from their

¹ *Burgh Schools*, p. 73. Grant's opinion, throughout his discussion of this matter, is too highly-coloured.

² It is surprising how seldom we can trace the career of individual men of the Middle Ages from school onwards. For an instance, see *Rentale Dunkeldense*, p. 302.

³ *Les écoles de Chartres*, p. 419.

chaplainries *plus* the "scolage" paid by their pupils.¹ Even the Master appointed by Holyrood to the High School of Edinburgh in 1529/30 was obliged, in virtue of his office, to serve in the choir of the Abbey Church "with his surplice upon him" at high mass and evensong on festivals.² It is from a schoolmaster, himself a chantry priest,³ and writing when medieval education had reached the zenith of its development, that the most scathing indictment of Scottish education in the period comes. The words of Ninian Winzet, who supplies this *locus classicus*, are well-known :

"Bot as vnderstanding with science is maist specialye and happelie conquest in zouth the sua nane doutis it at that tyme obtenit maist firmlie to be reseruit in memorie and maist fruit to cum thairto. The singular vtilitie thairto to the commoun welth causit me to maruell gretumlie quhon in tymes passit amang sa gret liberalitie and ryche dotations maid in Scotland of sindry foundatiounis to religion and science, that sa litle respect hes euir bene had to the grammar sculis (quhairin commonlie the maist happy and first sedis of the said common welth ar sawin) ; that in mony townis thair is not sa mekle prouidit thairto as a common house and in nane almaist of al ane sufficient lif to ane techear. . . . And agane quhon it mycht be that at this time, quhen men presis to reforme al cause of ignorance and abuse, that sa few childer war haldin at the studie of ony science and specialie of grammar. The contempt heirfor of this smal enteres to science, without the quhilk na ferder progres may be had thairto, I coniecturit to be ane gret portent and foretaiking of ignorance and ma confusit errouris (quhilk God auert) schortlie to cum—namelie, sen now al men wilbe theologis and curius seircearis (searchers) of the hie mysteriis of God."⁴

This is the testimony of a devout Catholic who pitted himself against John Knox ; and Knox fortified his antagonist's testimony by his zeal to remedy the defects of medieval education through the educational programme of the Reformed Church.

¹ It is somewhat uncertain if they always retained this "scolage."

² *R.M.S.*, III, 918.

³ The description of Winzet as "Provost of the Collegiate Church of Linlithgow" is entirely inaccurate. Linlithgow never was a collegiate church.

⁴ Winzet, *The Thrid Tractat* (*S.T.S. ed.*), I, p. 24.

